



# New Affordable Housing in Elizabeth, New Jersey



*The Marina Village Housing development in Elizabeth, New Jersey.*

## Elizabeth, New Jersey

**L**everaged funding is critical to successful brownfields redevelopment. The City of Elizabeth used EPA grant funds to clarify environmental issues at local brownfields and was able to leverage \$6.2 million in state and federal funding to support development that meets local needs. This funding enabled a local non-profit developer to build a 35-unit affordable residential development called Marina Village.

Elizabeth, located south of Newark, boasts a population of 110,000 within its 11.6-square-mile area. Founded in 1664, Elizabeth was once home to a variety of manufacturing, tool, and die companies. As major companies closed or went bankrupt, residents migrated elsewhere, leaving the city responsible for abandoned properties with real or perceived contamination. By the 1990s, the city was in dire need of economic recovery. Furthermore, in order to slow the decreasing population trend, the city needed to provide affordable housing for its 10 percent unemployed and 16 percent below-poverty community.

In June 1997, EPA awarded the City of Elizabeth a \$200,000 Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot in order to identify and assess the city's brownfields. Ten contiguous brownfields were identified in the Elizabethport neighborhood, the oldest section of the city.

Under a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's (NJDEP) Voluntary Cleanup Program, environmental assessments were conducted on the ten brownfields in 1999. One year later, the New Jersey Redevelopment Authority awarded the City of Elizabeth \$525,000 for cleanup of these properties. Several former auto repair garages and a tavern had left behind metals and semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs), which were removed from the soil. Cleanup was completed in 2002.

The Elizabethport area has been a part of the HOPE VI's Neighborhood Revitalization Program since 1997. The HOPE VI Program funds demolition of distressed public housing and the construction of new housing. HOPE VI guarantees a 3:1 ratio-matching grant as an incentive for leveraging redevelopment funding. The city's Housing Authority selected Brand New Day Inc., a local non-profit developer, to redevelop

## JUST THE FACTS:

- A \$200,000 EPA Brownfields grant helped the City of Elizabeth perform assessments on ten targeted properties that included former auto repair sites.
- A subsequent \$525,000 grant from the New Jersey Redevelopment Authority was used to remove soil contamination from these ten brownfields.
- More than \$6 million has since been leveraged from the public sector to create attractive, affordable housing, aesthetic improvements, and new infrastructure on Elizabeth's former brownfields.

*"The development of Marina Village followed the script of how brownfield sites are expected to be developed: the identification of a problem, the rallying of resources, the establishment of partnerships, and the implementation and conclusion of a redevelopment plan."*

—William D. Jones,  
Executive Director  
City of Elizabeth Housing Authority

the Marina Village property. The Housing Authority and its partners leveraged more than \$6.2 million in redevelopment funding from a variety of sources, including: City of Elizabeth Home funds, \$370,000; State of New Jersey Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program, \$3,895,000; New Jersey Balance Housing Program, \$1,312,000; NJRA Brownfields Remediation Program, \$525,000; and the State Urban Enterprise Zone, \$183,770. The Housing Authority's HOPE VI Program contributed \$3,180,873 in matching funds.

The \$6.2 million of leveraged funds saw the vision of attractive, affordable housing realized. Built in 2003, the Marina Village development consists of 35 rental units, of which 20 are public housing units and 15 are low income housing tax credit units. Composed of one, two and three bedroom flats, duplexes, garden apartments and townhouses, the development also encompassed updates to the infrastructure including new curbing, paving, signage, street lighting, street trees and landscaping. Immediately after completion, the development was 100 percent occupied, and has remained so to this day.

"By redeveloping the Elizabethport brownfields site, we were able to meet the city's need for more affordable housing," said Elizabeth's Mayor Christian

Bollwage. "The Marina Village redevelopment fits into our overall commitment to provide 557 new residential units." In agreement with Mayor Bollwage, Housing

Authority Executive Director, William D. Jones stated, "The development of Marina Village followed the script of how brownfield sites are expected to be developed: the identification of a problem, the rallying of resources, the establishment of partnerships, and the implementation and conclusion of a redevelopment plan."

Elizabeth's revitalization efforts have paid off. Over the past few years, the city has gained more than 3,000 new residents, which places it as one of the fastest growing cities in the state.

*Additional housing units in Marina Village.*

Marina Village's success has spurred other residential redevelopment in the area. Shortly after its completion, HUD's HOPE VI program also funded a nearly \$30 million project that demolished parts of a nearby public housing development in order to rebuild townhouses for housing authority tenants.

"Having clean, developable land is the first step toward neighborhood revitalization. Using EPA's brownfields grant helped Elizabeth turn a contaminated site into a productive community where people can now live, work and raise a family," said former EPA Regional Administrator Jane M. Kenny.

The Marina Village project demonstrates how partnerships can lead to large economic rewards. For more information about the Brownfields projects in Elizabeth, NJ, please contact EPA Region 2 at (212) 637-5000.

## **CONTACTS:**

For more information contact  
U.S. EPA-REGION 2  
(212) 637-5000

Visit the EPA Brownfields Web site at:  
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>

